

# THE REFORMED FAITH

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*The Christian Attitude Toward War*  
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*The Millennium*  
*The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*  
*Roman Catholicism*  
*Studies in Theology*

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## 6. The Two Systems Contrasted

We have said that Christianity comes to its fullest expression in the Reformed Faith. The great advantage of the Reformed Faith is that in the framework of the Five Points of Calvinism it sets forth clearly what the Bible teaches concerning the way of salvation. Only when these truths are seen as a unit and in relation to each other can one really understand or appreciate the Christian system in all of its strength and beauty.

The reason that so many Christians have only a weak faith, and that so many churches present only a rather superficial form of Christianity, is that they never really see the system in its logical consistency. It is not enough for the professing Christian to know that God loves him and that his sins have been forgiven. He should know *how* and *why* his redemption has been accomplished and how it has been made effective. And that is set forth systematically in the Five Points of Calvinism.

Historically, the Five Points of Calvinism have been held by the Presbyterian and Reformed churches and by many Baptists, while the substance of the Five Points of Arminianism has been held by the Methodist and Lutheran churches and also by many Baptists.

The Five Points of Calvinism may be more easily remembered if they are associated with the word T-U-L-I-P:

- T – Total Inability
- U – Unconditional Election
- L – Limited Atonement
- I – Irresistible (Efficacious) Grace
- P – Perseverance of the Saints

The following material, taken from *Romans: an Interpretive Outline*, by David N. Steele and Curtis Thomas, Baptist ministers in Little Rock, Arkansas, contrasts the Five Points of Calvinism with the Five Points of Arminianism in the clearest and most concise form that we have found anywhere. It is also included as an

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Appendix in *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, by the present writer. Each of these books is published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, N.J.

The Five Points Of Arminianism	The Five Points of Calvinism
<p>1. <i>Free-Will or Human Ability.</i> Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does so in such a manner as not to interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free-will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.</p>	<p>1. <i>Total Inability or Total Depravity</i> Because of the fall in Adam man is unable of himself to savingly believe the Gospel. The sinner is spiritually dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God, his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free but is in bondage to his sinful nature. He is as spiritually dead and estranged from God as are the fallen angels – "dead through your trespasses and sins," Eph 2:1. Therefore he will not – indeed cannot – choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ – it takes regeneration by which the Spirit brings a sinner from spiritual death to spiritual life and gives him a new nature. "Ye must be born anew" (or, from above), John 3:17. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation – it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God. "By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, that no man should glory," Eph. 2:8,9.</p>

The Five Points of Arminianism	The Five Points of Calvinism
<p>2. <i>Conditional Election</i>. God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based on His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the Gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what Man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit), but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.</p>	<p>2. <i>Unconditional Election</i>. God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation, before the foundation of the world, rested solely on His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause, of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.</p>
<p>3. <i>Universal Redemption</i>. Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved, but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe in Him will be saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins.</p>	<p>3. <i>Limited Atonement</i>. Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His</p>

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<p>Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.</p>	<p>people. Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.</p>
<p>4. <i>The Holy Spirit Can Be Effectually Resisted.</i> The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the Gospel invitation. He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) precedes and makes possible the new birth. Thus man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man.</p>	<p>4. <i>The Efficacious Call of the Spirit or Irresistible Grace.</i> In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the Gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected, whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.</p>
<p>5. <i>Falling From Grace.</i> Those who believe and are truly saved can, and</p>	<p>5. <i>Perseverance of the Saints.</i> All who were chosen by God, redeemed</p>

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<p>some do, lose their salvation by failing to maintain their faith and good works. Not all Arminians have been agreed on this point; some have held that believers are eternally secure in Christ, that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.</p>	<p>by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.</p>
<p>According to Arminianism: Salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of GOD, who takes the initiative, and MAN, who must respond, man's response being the determining factor. God has provided salvation for everyone, but His provision becomes effective only for those who of their own free will, "choose" to cooperate with Him and accept His offer of grace. At the crucial point, man's will plays the decisive role; thus MAN, not God, determines who will be the recipients of salvation.</p>	<p>According to Calvinism: Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the triune God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect of faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the Gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus GOD, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.</p>